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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH// PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000519

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: "MODERATE ISLAMIC" SUMMIT STILL UP IN THE AIR

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 895

[1](#)B. RIYADH 440

[1](#)C. ANKARA 279

[1](#)D. ISLAMABAD 609

Classified by Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for
Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Timing for a follow-on summit to the February 24 Islamabad foreign ministers meeting on Middle East Peace remains unclear, according to Turkish MFA. Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey are concerned that the effort not be perceived as an anti-Iran initiative. Saudi Arabia wants agreement on a declaration before a summit is scheduled. Foreign Minister Gul's participation at the Arab League ministerial and Turkey's efforts to use its relationship with Israel to foster peace efforts are the latest examples of Turkey's increasing regional engagement. End Summary.

Islamabad Meeting on Middle East Peace

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Deputy Director General for the Middle East Omer Onhon told us March 7 that Turkey expects some kind of summit to follow the February 24 foreign ministers meeting in Islamabad to discuss Pakistan President Musharraf's Middle East Peace initiative (ref c), despite some disagreements. He underscored that Turkey supports the initiative but is concerned that it not increase polarization between countries. Malaysia, Indonesia and Pakistan agreed with Turkey on the importance of managing how the effort is perceived to ensure that it is not seen as being solely anti-Iran. Other countries, he said, held different views, especially Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and, to some extent, Egypt.

[1](#)3. (C) Because Saudi Arabia asserted that without agreement on a joint declaration there would be no need for a summit, Onhon said, the participants left the summit's timing undetermined. The participants agreed to consult their governments and be back in touch via diplomatic channels, but thus far neither Saudi Arabia nor Pakistan has given feedback on next steps. Onhon wondered if Ahmadinejad's visit to

Riyadh might change the equation.

¶4. (C) Onhon underscored that Turkey does not have high expectations for this initiative but appreciates the chance to share GOT views and does not consider it a substitute for the Quartet. It is a good thing that more countries are willing to step forward, particularly Saudi Arabia with its Hamas/Fatah effort and contacts with Iran. Onhon hoped for progress, highlighting as very useful Israel's messages to Saudi Arabia on what it could and could not accept in terms of a resolution.

Turkey Now Welcomed at Arab League

¶5. (C) Foreign Minister Gul's speech at the March 4 Arab League Ministerial marks a first for a Turkish foreign minister. Invited initially by Egypt and then by SG Moussa, Gul's speech on regional developments was well-received, Onhon asserted. Until three to four years ago, he said, Arab League countries accused Turkey of being too close to Israel. Turkey's previously poor relations with Syria also influenced the old relationship, Onhon said. As Turkish-Syrian relations improved after Syria expelled PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and as Syria became more isolated, Onhon explained, anti-Turkish rhetoric and feeling among the Arabs decreased. Before, the primary relationship entailed Turkey responding to negative accusations on issues such as water and so-called Turkish aggression.

¶6. (C) Onhon stated that the Arab League welcomed Turkey's offer to send technical experts to observe the al-Aqsa

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excavations, as agreed by PM Erdogan and Israeli PM Olmert during the latter's recent visit to Ankara. Onhon said the offer put Turkey in a difficult position, as it had the potential to upset Israel or the Palestinians, though both had welcomed the initiative. For that reason, only technical experts and Turkey's Jerusalem Consul General will comprise the delegation. Timing for the visit remains undetermined, he said.

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WILSON